

## 2024 Go West Tour Itinerary

### **Monday: Day 1 - Arrival in Dublin, Ireland**

Welcome to Ireland! You arrive in Dublin and check in to your city center hotel. Nothing is planned for this day so you can relax and wander Dublin as you'd like. Then off to bed with you for a good night's sleep, for tomorrow begins what we hope will be one of your best experiences yielding a lifetime of happy memories!

### **Tuesday: Day 2 – Dublin to Roscommon**

**Highlights:** Megalithic Tombs, Celtic Crosses, The Corlea Iron-Age Oak Road, Roscommon

Meet your guide and trip participants and begin your Irish adventure. First up you'll literally go west out of Dublin to the forgotten fifth province of Midhe and the Boyne Valley. Here, disciples of St. Columcille founded the medieval town of Kells. This monastic settlement produced highly ornate manuscripts like the famous Book of Kells now housed in Dublin's Trinity College. You'll visit the old churchyard of St. Columcille's to see the impressive medieval Round Tower and the incredible Celtic High Crosses carved from huge slabs of stone.

After Kells, you'll delve further into the Boyne Valley to unearth one of Ireland's finest treasures, the Loughcrew Cairns. These prehistoric tombs, containing passageways and inner chambers, were spiritual centers for Ireland's first farmers long before Egypt's great pyramids were built. Erected by Ireland's mysterious Neolithic people, the main tomb contains enigmatic carvings that are aligned and illuminated by the rising sun of the equinoxes. This ancient star-chart may be the oldest celestial calendar on earth!

Your journey continues through Ireland's mythical center and pastoral midlands to the mysterious Corlea Trackway. This Iron Age road, built of Irish oak through a dangerous bog and dense woodland, lay hidden for over 2,000 years. A large section has been preserved and housed to ponder this ancient road. Though its purpose remains unclear, its discovery provokes tantalizing parallels with old myths passed on for generations.

You will end your day in Roscommon, a charming town situated in the center of Ireland and part of Ireland's Hidden Heartlands. Your overnight accommodation is situated on the lovely market square where you will find an assortment of dining options.

### **Wednesday: Day 3 – Roscommon to Inishbofin Island**

**Highlights:** Lough Corrib, Cong, Sky Road, Clifden

Leaving Roscommon, you will traverse west towards the beautiful Lough Corrib, Ireland's second largest freshwater lake. Lough Corrib is reputed to have over 350 small islands and divides this part of Connemara from the rest of Ireland. As you drive along the lake, you will see numerous ruins, sheep and stunning views.

Reaching the top of Lough Corrib, you will arrive at the charming, old-world town of Cong. Made famous by the movie *The Quiet Man*, Cong is so much more than a pretty bridge. There, you will have time to lunch in one of the many delicious cafes, then spend some time discovering all that Cong has to offer, from its charming shops to beautiful remains of an Augustinian Abbey to fishing huts to caves.

After Cong, travel through Connemara's majestic mountain landscape by trout lakes and bogland. Keep a watchful eye for wild Connemara ponies, Ireland's only native breed and known for their kind and hardy nature. It was in this remote area that the first transatlantic flight by Alcock & Brown landed in 1919 and where Marconi sent wireless radio transmissions across the Atlantic.

Arriving at the fishing town of Cleggan, you will hop aboard a ferry and cruise to one of Europe's most westerly islands and the calm waters of the magical isle of Inishbofin - the Island of the White Cow. This remote Irish island is like a step back in time to a slower and simpler pace where you get to relax and do as little or as much as you want. But it was not always so. In the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, it was used as a base for the adventures of Grace O'Malley Pirate Queen of Connaught. Today, it is also considered an important outpost for traditional Irish music. You will spend the next two nights on this remote Irish island.

#### **Thursday: Day 4 – Inishbofin Island**

**Highlights:** Picturesque Inishbofin Island

Step back in time and explore this tranquil island noted for its pretty natural harbour dominated by the Cromwellian Fort, as well as its green pastures, sandy beaches, basking seals and abundant birdlife. The day is yours and the friendly locals will make you feel right at home.

There are easy looped walking trails where you can see massive blowholes, sea stacks, and the island of Inishark. Walk on deserted beaches, take a swim in the ocean, and gaze out on the endless horizon. You could also rent a bike, go horseback riding, visit the small Heritage Museum, or if the tide permits, cross the beach to Cromwell's Fort. Perhaps you'll be in luck, as Inishbofin is frequently visited by some of Ireland's best traditional musicians.

#### **Friday: Day 5 – Inishbofin to Westport**

**Highlights:** Connemara National Park, Sheep Dog Demo, Killary Harbor, Connemara Mountains, Irish Music & Westport Town

As you depart Inishbofin Island, you'll take the morning ferry to the mainland and travel to Connemara National Park, one of the six national parks of Ireland. Flanked by woods, bog, heath and grassland, Connemara National Park is part of the Twelve Bens (mountain peaks). Walk to the base of Diamond Hill or explore the diverse trees and wildflowers.

Your journey next takes you to the majestic fjord of Killary Harbor. This 16 km sea-filled gorge has rich waters for salmon and mussels and the towering Mweerea, the highest mountain in the region, further enhances its incredible beauty.

Your next stop is at a remote mountain farm where you'll meet a local farmer who'll delight in showing off his cherished border collies. These spirited dogs will enchant you with their joy and skill at herding sheep, all the while faithfully obeying the farmer's directions via a series of calls and whistles.

The route then makes inroads into County Mayo through the stunning scenery of Delphi and Doo Lough. You'll come upon Croagh Patrick, Ireland's Holy Mountain, said to be where Saint Patrick cast the snakes from Ireland's shores. Then finally to your last stop for the day and your home for the next two nights, Westport. This laid back town is a fantastic place to unwind and wander its many shops, pubs, and restaurants. Traditional Irish music sessions (or as the locals say 'trad sessions') are plentiful. Stop by Matt Molloy's Bar – started by The Chieftain's flutist who has been known to stop by and join a session.

### **Saturday: Day 6 – Free Day in Westport**

Sleep in, shop or head out to explore the gorgeous surrounds. Hike Croagh Patrick for some of the most incredible views in the world. Rent a bike or go for a walk along the “Great Western Greenway,” a bucolic trail starting in Westport. Within a short walk is Westport House, one of Ireland's grand period homes, built upon the castle ruins that once housed the infamous pirate queen, Grace O'Malley. Golfing, fishing, and a cruise of Clew Bay are all available. Enjoy another night in this vibrant town!

### **Sunday: Day 7 – Westport to Sligo City**

**Highlights:** Harry Clarke Stained Glass, Franciscan Friary, Hilltop Caves, Sligo

Saying goodbye to Westport, your route winds north to the rural town of Newport to take a peak inside its local church. This grand hilltop house of worship contains magnificent stained glass windows. Created by Harry Clarke, one of Ireland's most accomplished artists, these beautiful windows were his last and perhaps finest works.

After ducking down narrow country lanes, discover a 600 year-old Franciscan Friary. Having stood the test of time, enjoy exploring its cloisters, fascinating carvings, and glorious Gothic arches.

After lunch, your journey takes you to view a series of hilltop caves that are illuminated by the afternoon sun. These dramatic caves carved from the limestone mountain are the setting for many myths and legends with human remains dating back to the Iron Age. Then it's off to Sligo City to your hotel beside the Garavogue River where lively pubs, restaurants, and traditional Irish music await.

### **Monday: Day 8 – Sligo City to Dublin**

**Highlights:** Benbulbin, Yeat's Grave, Ancient Tomb, Carrick-on-Shannon, Dublin

Leaving Sligo City, you'll travel briefly to County Sligo to visit Benbulbin, Ireland's most distinctive mountaintop dominating the landscape. This is Yeats Country. It is here in Sligo where the venerable poet, W.B. Yeats, was laid to rest and along the way you'll stop and visit his famous gravestone in the old cemetery of Drumcliff, also known for its impressive Celtic High Cross. Further on, you will visit the remains of an ancient tomb. The impressively balanced capstone will boggle your mind as to how the prehistoric Irish raised such massive stones.

Continue onto the town of Carrick-on-Shannon nestled on Ireland's longest and mightiest waterway, the River Shannon. Take a peek at one of Ireland's smallest churches or stroll the banks of the Shannon alongside house-barges and riverboats. Have fun meandering by the local shops and cafes to find a delicious lunch.

After a fun-filled week discovering Ireland's wonderful west, it's back to lively Dublin and your last night on the Emerald Isle. Enjoy a meal in one of the many fine restaurants, savor the final hours of your Go West Tour, and cherish a lifetime of amazing memories!

### **Slán Beo! Irish for “Goodbye, live life!”**

While it is our intention to adhere to the route described above, there is a certain amount of flexibility built into the itinerary and on occasion, it may be necessary, or desirable, to make alterations. The information in the itinerary has been compiled with care and is provided in good faith. However, it is subject to change, and does not form part of the contract between the client and Inroads Ireland.

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